

Message Text

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SUBJECT: IMPACT OF SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE ON CROAT
MINORITY IN AUSTRIA

REF: A. VIENNA 8297; B. VIENNA 8441; C. BELGRADE 4816

SUMMARY: SOCIALIST SHORT-TERM INTEREST IN MOBILIZING
PRO-SOCIALIST ELEMENTS AMONG BURGENLAND CROATS IN
SUPPORT OF SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS IN AUSTRIA MAY GIVE
RISE UNINTENTIONALLY TO CREATION OF ANOTHER MINORITY
PROBLEM AREA IN AUSTRIA AND TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS
FOR SOCIALISTS WHO GOVERN AUSTRIA'S EASTERNMOST PROVINCE.
END SUMMARY

1. RECENT AGITATION OVER SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE IN
AUSTRIA AND YUGOSLAVIA HAS HAD UNSETTLING IMPACT ON
CROAT MINORITY OF ABOUT 30,000 (11.3 PERCENT OF
POPULATION) IN BURGENLAND. HITHERTO GENERALLY SATISFIED
WITH THEIR SITUATION, BURGENLAND CROATS ARE NOW BEING
PRESSURED BY LEADERSHIP OF THEIR "CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS"
TO TAKE SIDES FOR OR AGAINST "SPECIAL CENSUS" FOR
SLOVENE MINORITY.

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2. ON SEP. 28, SOCIALIST NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY

FRIEDRICH ROBAK SAID IN PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT "OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF CROAT-SPEAKING POPULATION OF BURGENLAND WOULD WELCOME SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS IN AUSTRIA." ROBAK, HIMSELF A BURGENLAND CROAT, TOOK ISSUE WITH WHAT HE CALLED EFFORT OF "SMALL GROUP OF OUTSIDERS OF CROAT MINORITY WHO ARROGATE TO THEMSELVES RIGHT TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF BURGENLAND CROATS AND TO ACT AS IF THERE WERE A CROATIAN PROBLEM."

3. CROATIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF BURGENLAND RESPONDED TO ROBAK'S CLAIM WITH PRESS STATEMENT OCT. 1 WARNING THAT MINORITY CENSUS COULD IMPAIR PEACE AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS IN BURGENLAND AND THAT THEREFORE PROPOSAL WAS BEING REJECTED.

4. COMMENT: CROAT MINORITY IN BURGENLAND IS DIVIDED ROUGHLY INTO TWO CATEGORIES: (1) PRO-SOCIALIST ELEMENT WHICH, WHILE MAINTAINING RESIDENCE IN BURGENLAND, TRAVELS ON DAILY OR WEEKLY BASIS TO PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT AT INDUSTRIAL CENTERS LOCATED IN LARGER CITIES, E.G. VIENNA AND FAVORS ASSIMILATION INTO ETHNIC AUSTRO-GERMAN ELEMENT AS MEANS OF IMPROVING ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS IN SOCIETY; AND (2) CONSERVATIVE PEASANTS WHO HAVE SMALL HOLDINGS, ARE INTEGRATED INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES OF CROATIAN ANTECEDENTS, AND ARE DETERMINED TO PRESERVE THEIR CROATIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE.

5. ROBAK'S SALLY IN SUPPORT OF "SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS" IS CALCULATED ATTEMPT BY SOCIALISTS TO COUNTER CLAIMS OF SLOVENE MINORITY AND YUGOSLAV SUPPORTERS THAT AUSTRIA'S MINORITIES PER SE OPPOSE ANY HEAD COUNT AND TO UNDERMINE ANY SLOVENE EFFORT TO SEEK SUPPORT OF SLAV BROTHERS IN BURGENLAND.

6. ATTEMPT TO MOBILIZE PRO-SOCIALIST CROATS IN BURGENLAND ON BEHALF OF MINORITY HEAD COUNT MAY PROVE TO BE EXERCISE IN POLITICAL SUICIDE FOR SOCIALISTS IN BURGENLAND. SOCIALISTS HAVE UNFORTUNATE POLITICAL FATE, AS IN CARINTHIA (WHERE SLOVENE MINORITY LOCATED), TO BE ALSO GOVERNING PARTY IN BURGENLAND. BURGENLAND ETHNIC

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LANDSCAPE FURTHER COMPLICATED BY PRESENCE OF SLOVAK AND HUNGARIAN MINORITIES. POLITICAL AGITATION AMONG CROATS IN BURGENLAND MAY WELL LEAD TO RAISING CONSCIOUSNESS OF OTHER MINORITIES TO THEIR REAL OR IMAGINED POLITICAL OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC ILLS AND TO GENERATION OF CONTROVERSY IN PROVINCE WHICH HERETOFOR HAS BEEN PROUD OF ITS REPUTATION AS BORDER AREA IN WHICH ALL PEOPLES LIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE AND RELATIVE PROSPERITY.

END COMMENT. HUMES

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